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[redacted]

DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE
WASHINGTON

CORONA

OFFICE OF THE UNDER SECRETARY

13 AUG 1964

MEMORANDUM FOR INTERDEPARTMENTAL CONTINGENCY PLANNING COMMITTEE

SUBJECT: Committee Meeting

The (S) Director/National Reconnaissance Office has requested that a meeting of the (TS) National Reconnaissance Program Interdepartmental Contingency Planning Committee be convened in Room 4E886, Pentagon Building, 1100, 14 August 1964. An agenda and background materials are attached.

JAMES T. STEWART
Brigadier General, USAF
Director
(S) NRO Staff

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SUMMARY OF EVENTS

On 1 August 1964, the Assistant Army Attache, Caracas, was informed by a commercial photographer, San Cristobal, that a space capsule containing equipments with markings "U.S. - Secret" had been found at a point 10 kilometers from La Fria, Venezuela. The Assistant Army Attache was subsequently advised that the local Venezuelan Army Commander had commandeered the equipment and had been instructed to forward to the Venezuelan Army (G-2), Caracas. The Assistant Army Attache was on the aircraft which brought the equipments to Caracas on 5 August. The equipment was turned over to the U.S. Embassy by the Venezuelan Government on 10 August.

A comparison of certain recorded equipments serial numbers with the records of the prime CORONA contractor established definitely that the space object which impacted was identical with the first recovery capsule of CORONA/J mission 1005 which was launched 27 April 1964. This satellite had malfunctioned on-orbit and normal recovery attempts were unsuccessful.

According to computation of the 6594th Test Wing, Sunnyvale, California, the satellite with recovery capsule re-entered through normal decay on 26 May 1964. At that time, the final impact prediction from that source was 79 degrees south, 147 degrees west at 0343Z plus or minus 30 minutes.

At the same time, however, SPADATS, under tasking of the (S) NRO, was checking an improved impact prediction program which, as of 1 July 1964, was established as standard method of operation for all (S) NRO space objects. This program predicted the satellite with impact travelling south to north in the general area of Venezuela. Personnel at Quito, Equador; Maracaibo, Venezuela; and Grand Turk were alerted to observe re-entry. Both Quito and Grand Turk reported negative sightings. Maracaibo reported sighting 5 pieces passing overhead and presumably impacting in the Carribean area.

Since confirmation of the spacecraft's (TS) National Reconnaissance Program origin, the CIA established communications with its representative in Caracas concerning this matter. A special team consisting of one each technical representative from the (S) NRO Staff and CIA, and a CIA Security Officer were

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dispatched to Caracas to assess the local situation and return the equipments to the U.S. for further examination. The CIA Security Officer departed Caracas 1500 local hours, 12 August, with the returned equipments, destination - the SETD in Palo Alto, California.

Initial examination by the special team in Caracas disclosed considerable damage due to heat experienced during re-entry and from forceable entry into the space capsule by natives. It has been noted that the transmitter previously identified from commercial photographs of the equipment which had borne the classification "Secret" is missing and is believed to have been retained by the host government. In addition, the following list of items is known to be missing:

(A) Parachute, in hands of government at La Fria or San Cristobal.

(B) Flashing light, location unknown.

(C) Portion of ablator. (Nose piece, aft ring, and misc fragments shipped.)

(D) Most of fiberglass parts of parachute cover.

(E) Thrust cone.

(F) Rocket motor.

(G) Most of gold discs, retained by host nati[redacted]VES One disc returned.

U.S. press coverage has been scant, based upon Reuters, AP, and UPI dispatches from Caracas during the period 4 - 6 August. Venezuelan press coverage during initial period was considerable but not sensational. There has been no speculation on the part of either the U.S. or Venezuelan press as to the photographic reconnaissance mission. Except for an inquiry by Aviation Week magazine of State Department Science Advisor on 13 August, there is no current press interest indicated.

U.S. Air Attache, Caracas, advised that upon completion of investigation, an unclassified description, with photographs, and purpose of the mission would be required for transmittal to the Venezuelan Minister of Defense.

Appropriate personnel within the Executive Office, CIA, State Department, and DOD, including DOD public affairs personnel, have been apprised of this matter.

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U. S. GOVERNMENT STATEMENTS TO DATE

U.N. Registry Data: "1964 - 22A launch vehicle THOR AGENA, Satellite category A (development of spacecraft techniques and technology; date of launch 27 April 1964, Nodal period 90.8, Inclination 79.97, Apogee 444.5, Perigee 174.6."

Published Goddard Space Flight Center Data: "Object 22 A, catalogue #796, source U.S., launch 27 April, decay 26 May 1964."

U.S. Embassy, Caracas: No formal statement, however, U.S. Embassy spokesman orally confirmed spacecraft of U.S. origin.

SAFOI: In response to Hearst Syndicate 6 August request for confirmation of UPI bulletin: No information but would look into matter.

State Department, Science Advisor's Office: In response to AVIATION WEEK inquiry of 12 August: No information available.

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U. S. PRESS TO DATE

REUTERS, 4 Aug

"Caracas, Venezuela, Aug 4 (Reuters)- United States experts and Venezuelan Police today examined a North American space capsule found by villagers near the Colombian Border.

"News of the discovery in the Guarimito area north of the Andean town of Cristobal was brought to Caracas by the pilot of a photo survey airplane.

"He said the villagers saw the object fall some weeks ago. They stripped the capsule of camera apparatus and other equipment.

"One villager used nylon cords to make reins for his horse.

"The capsule measures about one by two yards and bears the date Nov 24, 1963."

UPI

"Caracas Venezuela - - A 'strange object' which fell from the sky near remote Venezuelan village last month has been identified as a U.S. satellite, it was reported today.

"Two U.S. Army officers who went to the Colombian-Border village of La Fria Tuesday identified the 175-pound object as American through contract numbers on a radio set, a U.S. Embassy spokesman said."

AP, 5 Aug

"Caracas, Venezuela, Aug 5 (AP). United States military investigators yesterday headed for a remote mountain village accessible only on foot, where peasants have discovered an American space instrument package.

"Peasants found the apparatus 23 days ago and began using parachute strands for donkey harnesses. Venezuelan authorities got word of the find and notified American officials. The United States Embassy said the device fell in Tachira State, near the Colombian border. It contained cameras, radio transmitters and other scientific instruments marked secret."

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PROPOSAL

Under no circumstances will information be volunteered to the press. Releases will be made only upon specific inquiry from the press.

Response to Venezuelan AP and UP news agency upon specific inquiry by U.S. Embassy, Caracas: "Charred portions of a space vehicle which impacted in La Fria, Venezuela, late in May have been identified as being of U.S. origin. Venezuelan authorities have turned over the equipment to the U.S. authorities who are returning them to the U. S. for detailed examination."

State Department: If queried by the press, the State Department should advise equipments have been established as being of U.S./DOD origin and refer to DOD for details.

Assistant Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs and/or SAFOI:
Proposed press release #1, up until 19 August: "Charred portions of a space vehicle which impacted in Venezuela late in May have been ~~tentatively~~ identified as being of U. S. origin. Venezuelan authorities have turned recovered portions over to U.S. authorities who are returning them to the U.S. for detailed examination."
Proposed press release #2, to be released after 19 August: "After examination it has been determined that the portions of a space vehicle which impacted in Venezuela late in May were a part of registered satellite #22-A which was launched from Vandenberg AFB 27 April 1964 to assist in the development of spacecraft techniques and technology."

For the Venezuelan Minister of Defense through the U.S. Attache in Caracas, not to be released prior to 19 August: "The equipments which impacted near La Fria, Venezuela, which were returned to the U.S. Government by Venezuelan authorities have been established as being portions of a space vehicle launched from Vandenberg AFB, California, for the purpose of assisting in the development of spacecraft

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"techniques and technology. This space vehicle was estimated to have re-entered the atmosphere through normal decay 26 May 64 in the general Carribean area. Examination of the equipment by U.S. technicians will provide extremely valuable corroborating data re the performance of spacecraft. (Para) Cooperation rendered by the Venezuelan Government, the Venezuelan Army, Police officials, and the good citizens of Venezuela, without which this valuable data would not have been available, is greatly appreciated." It is further proposed that this statement be accompanied by several unclassified photographs of THOR AGENA launches.

A G E N D A

Meeting of Interdepartmental Contingency Planning Committee

14 Aug 64 - 11:00

Room 4E886, Pentagon Bldg

ITEM #1 - Consideration of contingency matters concerned with recent impact of portions of CORONA/J Mission 1005 in Venezuela.

(A) Summary of Events (Attachment A).

(B) Briefing with respect to situation as observed in Venezuela. (Major Johnson, (S) NRO Staff and Mr. Holser, CIA, presently enroute to U.S. from Caracas.)

(C) U.S. Government statements to date (Attachment B).

(D) U.S. Press to date (Attachment C).

(E) Proposal (Attachment D).

ITEM #2 - Consideration to formation of CONTINGENCY WORKING/ ACTION GROUP which, under contingency circumstances, would effect immediate liaison, establish appropriate communications, advise their principals, and prepare subject matters for presentation to Contingency Cover Committee. (Brig Gen Stewart, Director, (S) NRO Staff)

ITEM #3 - Consideration of contingency and cover factors involved in the impending SAC 147B photographic drone operation (Blue Springs) [redacted] (Colonel Steakley, JCS)

INTERDEPARTMENTAL CONTINGENCY PLANNING COMMITTEE

Meeting at 1100 hours, 14 August 64

CHAIRMAN

Dr. Brockway McMillan - DOD

MEMBERS

Mr. Peter Jessup - White House

MR. Thomas Halsted
~~Mr. George L. Denny Jr~~
or
Mr. H. Bartlett Wells - State Dept

Col Jack Ledford - CIA

Mr. Edwin Roth - CIA

Col Leo P. Geary - AFIGO-S
Col Clinton Saunders
Col Ralph D. Steakley - JCS

Col James Cole - DIA

CONSULTANT

Col Maurice Casey - USAF

BRIEFING TEAM

Major Albert W. Johnson - SAFSS

Mr. Alex Holser - CIA